Cobham and Downside Residents' Association

Newsletter, Autumn 2024

Hamilton Avenue playground opening, a Day of Fun, Sunshine and Community Spirit

Last year the CDRA applied for and received CIL money to refurbish Hamilton Avenue playground. Local resident, Shirley Mensah, wanted to be able to totally replace the park and with the help of Surrey Councillor David Lewis applied for additional money from Your Fund to add to the CIL funding.

The opening of the playground was on 31st August and what a fantastic time we had at the 'Party in the Park'. The day may have started with light rain (which we prayed profusely to stop), but those prayers were answered with beautiful sunshine, warmly welcoming everyone to the park.

From 11 am to 1 pm, the park was bustling with excitement. We had over 50 kids register, though there were so many people – kids and adults alike – it was hard to keep count. Shirley Mensah kicked things off by welcoming everyone, followed by Rev Charleen Hollington offering a lovely prayer to bless the newly refurbished park. Then, with eager children waiting at the gates, David Lewis, our Surrey County Councillor, officially opened the park, and off they went, rushing in to play!

CDRA committee members, who had raised some of the money for the park from CIL funding, were there to watch the fun along with Denise Turner-Stewart, Surrey Council Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities, and Rev Dr. Mike Branscombe, Vicar of St Andrew's Church. Also present were representatives from the police and fire services, and yes, the fire truck made a grand appearance, much to the delight of the children!

There was a fun trail around the park for the kids, and completing it earned them a trip to the local Premier shop for an ice cream – a great way to engage local businesses. Under the gazebos, there were plenty of crafts, activities, and games, including a fiercely competitive table football match between the dads! The food was provided by the team from St Andrew's. Roll on the next party!

Hamilton Avenue's new playground being opened by David Lewis and Charleen Hollington

A close-up of some of the equipment in Hamilton Avenue playground

With thanks to Curchods Estate Agents for posting out these newsletters.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Firstly, we are absolutely delighted to report that the first batch of saplings we planted a few years ago on the Leg O'Mutton Field is now becoming quite distinctive – see photo below. You will notice that we have been able to take off the collars that were protecting the saplings from being nibbled by deer and rabbits. The second batch, which appears to be on less fertile soil, is starting to take shape but at a slower rate. We could always do with some help trimming up and clearing the weeds/grass around the base of the sapling. If you are interested please email us at info@cdra.co.uk

The CDRA is concerned regarding the continued loss of Cobham's living landscape. Therefore we have been working with councillors and tree and planning officers to create strategies which encourage and improve protection, restoration and enhancement of trees and hedges within planning, to create a biodiversity net gain and the continuation of the benefits that trees provide.

In order to do this, the newly adopted Elmbridge Design Code (https://elmbridge.commonplace.is/) includes section 5; Nature. This relates to Street and Urban Greening and directs that developers should refer to 'Building with Nature Standards' and Natural England's 'Green Infrastructure Framework' and that they must achieve a biodiversity net gain (BNG) with a development.

Section 5.3 Enhancing the riverside, recognises the importance of the natural setting of the rivers in Elmbridge including The Mole at Cobham.

Added to that is Development Management advice note 7 – supporting and encouraging nature in development, which requires all development to preserve, manage and enhance biodiversity and does not result in a net loss of BNG. It deters against site clearance, allowing the earlier habitat state as the baseline for assessment. You can see this by googling 'planning and policy guidance Elmbridge'

We do hope that this will encourage developers, architects and builders to recognise and embrace the importance of Cobham's green, beneficial character for generations of residents and wildlife to come.

ELMBRIDGE PLANNING CONSULTATIONS

Elmbridge has put out 2 consultation papers – Local Validation Requirements and Statement of Community Involvement. The 'log in' page can be accessed via the link: https://consult.elmbridge.gov.uk/system/user.

Local Validation Requirements: the Local validation requirements has 4 proposed changes. There is significant additional requirement that needs to be put together prior (e.g. Design Code checklist, Biodiversity assessments etc.) to submitting an application.

1. Proposed Design Code Validation requirements

2. Proposed Biodiversity Net Gain Validation requirements

3. Proposed Biodiversity/Ecological Assessment Validation requirements

4. Proposed Street Scene Validation requirements

Statement of Community Involvement: the main points are whether the names/addresses of the objectors or commenters be redacted on letters or emails sent in by the public and potential discontinuation of hard copies of the local plan documents.

CDRA has responded to the both the consultation papers. For more information on Design code adopted in 2024, use the link - https://elmbridge.commonplace.is/

The new saplings on the Leg O'Mutton Field are growing well

SANDY LANE IMPROVEMENTS

A recent survey indicates that there is a reduction in the speed limit compared to the survey taken in June 2022 (prior to the reduction in speed limit).

However, the condition of the lane, especially for the first half mile (at the Copsem Lane end) is very poor.

- As mentioned in the last newsletter, we were disappointed that our application (put forward by Cllr David Lewis on behalf of the residents) to get Sandy Lane to be included in 'Project Horizon' has been turned down by Surrey Highways saying that it didn't meet its assessment criteria. Project Horizon is the funding pot held and allocated by Surrey Highways for more significant road repairs. We have requested Cllr David Lewis to make another attempt to see if we can be placed on Project Horizon list.
- In the absence of a long-term solution such as Project Horizon, we need to keep pressing Surrey Highways to get the potholes filled. Potholes were filled towards end of last year, but the road has since deteriorated after the rains. To keep the pressure on Surrey Highways to repair the potholes, we request as many residents as possible to report pothole issues at www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport.

We are scheduling a meeting with Reed's School to see whether smaller coaches can be used to alleviate the damage to the sides of Sandy Lane and traffic issues during morning and evening hours.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

For those of you who use the 715 or the 513 to go to and from Kingston, the reopening of Cromwell Road bus station, due for this summer, has been delayed until this autumn - no date given by TfL.

The reason is the discovery of an (unmapped) high-pressure water pipe during excavation, together with a steel subcontractor going into administration. The 715 and 513 will continue to terminate at Eden Street for the time being.

Local Plan

Conscious of the new Government's well publicised intentions relating to increased house building targets, we thought an update on how this could impact our local area, might be of interest to our membership. You may be aware that the Elmbridge Local Plan is currently being reviewed by the Government appointed Inspector ahead of its formal approval. This Local Plan is predicated on building 450 houses per year over the next 5 year period, a reduction of the originally proposed figure of 650 houses - a figure derived from the now discredited 'mutant algorithm' used by the previous Government.

We understand from discussion with our local councillors, that the proposed figure arising from the increase sought by the new Government is calculated to be 1400 new houses a year for the next 5 years in Elmbridge. This figure has yet to be formally approved, but is clearly an indication as to the increase in numbers of new houses the Government expects to be built in our area. If such an increase is to be delivered, then large developments are inevitable such as have been previously proposed e.g. Chippings Farm and/or Polyapes.

It is therefore important that the current Elmbridge Local Plan approval process is completed, as the Government has made clear that its first target for increased house building will be in those areas with no Local Plan in place. This is something our Local Councillors are monitoring closely on our behalf. Again as commented upon in the media, any increase in house building is dependent on the supply not only of land but also of builders, bricklayers and materials - especially bricks! There are of course many priorities facing the Government, however we should over the course over time expect, and be prepared for, an increase in the number of new houses to built in our area. It is the timing and scale of such an increase which has yet to be established and which we will actively monitor and provide updates as appropriate.

Please let us know if you change your address, email info@cdra.co.uk

SKATE PARK REPLACEMENT

We've reached the final stages of what has been a 3-year long process. The Surrey County Council Your Fund team, who manage the grant process, have indicated that we now need to raise some of our own funding to demonstrate 'community support' for the project. This is a change from the original concept when the Your Fund programme was launched post Covid, and 100% funding was available. As our user target for this skatepark is primarily a community whose educational, employment, mental and physical health suffered adversely during (and post) Covid, we, as a small group of volunteers acting as advocates for this specific community, never envisaged asking this group for funding directly – we felt the Your Fund programme provided the perfect opportunity to support this community, for whom there is a recognised shortfall in such outdoor facilities.

We are therefore planning to launch a crowdfunding page with the hope of securing some self generated funds as required by the Your Fund team; we will also engage with our local business community via OneCobham, and seek some funding support on the grounds that they will inevitably benefit from the expected increase in footfall resulting from the presence of a new world class skatepark located in the Leg O'Mutton field. Having involved over 200 excited youngsters in the design of this new skatepark and secured overwhelming local support via the planning process, we are determined to see this game-changing project through to its successful completion. We hope you will be able to demonstrate your support, however small, once our crowdfunding site is up an running. (Please watch your email, our website and our Facebook page for details of the launch of the site).

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

We have made objections or comments commented on a number of applications that we feel affect neighbours, future occupiers, the natural environment, the green belt and the verdant character of Cobham.Below is a sub-set of the applications:

- McDonalds, Portsmouth Road Cobham, KT11 1JF. No decision as yet.
- Land off Anyards Road and Copse Road. No decision as yet.
- Application for 4 detached houses at 105 Fairmile Lane Cobham, KT11 2DD. No decision as yet.

. 2024/1825 flats at 40 Fairmile Lane Cobham Surrey KT11 2DQ. No decision as yet.

WHY NOT ASK A FRIEND OR NEIGHBOUR TO JOIN THE CDRA?

It is only by having a significant number of members that we can truly represent the community. Why not take this copy of the newsletter to a friend or relative and see if they would like to join the CDRA?

For an annual fee of just £7.50 per household membership includes: two newsletters a year, informative emails on local issues and attendance at our yearly Open Meeting. Membership taken out today will include the rest of 2024 and all of 2025.

To pay using **PAYPAL or DEBIT/CREDIT CARD**: visit our website, www.cdra.co.uk, and click on the 'Join Us' button or scan here:

TO PAY ONLINE: use account number: **12422371**, sort code: **60 06 03**, account name: **Cobham and Downside Residents Association**, reference: **your name**. Please also email info@cdra.co.uk with your name, address and the date you paid online so we have your contact details.

CHEQUES: made out to CDRA should be sent with your name, address and email to: CDRA Membership, 24 Pipers Close, Cobham KT11 3AU.